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ABSTRACT

An approach designed to increase the viability of college music departments, the Music Enrollment Campaign (MECA), is discussed. The approach involves the development of departmentalized enrollment strategies. The first step is a needs assessment by an outside consultant to identify the qualities, capabilities, and limitations of the department. The consultant considers such areas as enrollment, music curriculum and facilities, music personnel, and student music organizations. A main objective is to increase the number of music majors/minors and the enrollment in general music courses. Enrollment strategies are planned collaboratively with other administrative offices. Another objective is to promote opportunities for music department performances on campus and in the community. Increased institutional awareness of the department and support from both the institution and the community are sought. At the core of the MECA plan are miniprojects related to recruitment, music organizations, publicity, department events, and publications. The department needs only the freedom to allocate the budget in accordance with program requirements, rather than additional funds. The enrollment campaign approach is also available as an automated program. Responsibilities of the music chair are noted and dramatic results are described for one college that used MECA to reverse an enrollment decline. (SW)

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When a Department's Life Is On The Line: Enter MECA -- Music Enrollment Campaign

Patricia A. Sarazen

Declining enrollment is the major issue in higher education today. Its causes are many and varied, but its effects are lethal for colleges and universities which now must compete for students in order to maintain school operations. Curricular offerings are influenced directly by enrollment. Retrenchment has caused "nonessential" programs to be sacrificed impetuously. In addition, many college students are no longer interested in "learning for the sake of learning" or in studying subjects unrelated to employment fields or to professional studies, even as electives. Many academic programs that once were popular now are considered impractical and irrelevant; for example, programs in the creative and performing arts have lost their status as a "staple" of a liberal education. Although low enrollment and limited appeal alone can victimize any academic department, other pressures do exist.

Contributing to the crisis are the recent "calls for excellence" in both secondary and postsecondary education by the Department of Education, the Carnegie Commission, the College Board, and others. Countless reports recommend major reforms for education. The nationwide call for accountability has implications for all higher education programs, especially the "nonessential." While institutions are offsetting enrollment declines and assessing academic programs, these departments must fortify their positions within the academic environment. They must prove

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not only their educational value but also their financial worth to their college or university.

Unfortunately, colleges and universities facing declining enrollment often compromise their institutional offerings. Fewer students translates into fewer dollars for programs. In order to provide quality and to ensure quantity, administrators resort to retrenching programs that are not in demand. Their solution is to deplete or to delete those "nonessential" academic departments whose programs, supposedly, drain educational resources (both students and dollars). Evidence of this trend appears in recent research.

> At the state level, a survey of 46 state agencies for higher education reveals that a nucleus of 26 states is involved in recommending, initiating, and deciding on program discontinuance. An additional six states are initating or recommending terminations. . . . In terms of types of boards, 84 percent of the participating governing boards and 73 percent of the 22 coordinating agencies are involved to some degree in terminating programs (Melchiori, 1982, p.10).

But what about the departments, the faculty, the staff, and the students affected by this practice? Can the departments combat this rationale? How do they build a case for themselves? Specifically, this crisis affects Departments of Music, which are more and more often confronting the enrollment problem.

Success Story: Enrollment Turnaround

One Music Department has faced this enrollment crisis and has discovered a winning strategy. In 1983, a small liberal arts college in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area introduced a marketing and recruitment program with rather dramatic results: a 29 percent increase in Music Majors/Minors and a retention of general music students, at the same time that the college was experiencing a 15 percent overall enrollment decline. For the 1984-85 school year, the college enrollment deficit has increased from 50 percent to 58 percent; the Music Department enrollment deficit has decreased from 53 percent to 40 percent. In addition, the number of musical performing groups and performing opportunities for students has increased. The department has received more requests to represent the college at official functions. The Music Department has made these strides while operating within its own budget (a budget that has not increased significantly in three years) and combatting an Admissions Office that emphasizes other programs.

How did this Music Department, which had been fearful of its very existence for lack of students, turn around its enrollment? Simply, it recovered by applying the objectives and the procedures in

MECA: Music Enrollment Campaign.

MECA has changed campus attitudes about the value of the Music Department and has increased the college's visibility in the

community. These initial improvements will proliferate as the department continues its MECA program during the 1984-85 academic year.

This one example proves that Music Departments can curtail falling enrollments by initiating departmentalized enrollment strategies.

The MECA Plan

Originally developed solely for Music Departments, the Music Enrollment Campaign is a personalized marketing strategy geared to specific departments. It is based on the idea that any program has two sources of students: the present student body and prospective freshmen and/or transfer students. Enrolling any of these students obviously is beneficial to the department, but increasing the number of new students -- incoming freshmen or transfers -- has the added advantage of benefitting the entire school.

As important, the enrollment program increases institutional awareness of and appreciation for the Music Department. It combats the idea that the department drains institutional resources. MECA does this by working with a department's own funds and personnel and by taking advantage of student participation. The Music Department controls the program; the school administration and supporting staff work cooperatively with the department. Finally, an external consultant customizes the general MECA plan for the specific institution.

MECA works because its strategic focus is simply to produce students. It molds to the particular department, not vice versa.

Key Element: Objective Evaluation

A needs assessment is the essential first step in the MECA process. It involves an in-depth analysis of the Music Department and its resources by an objective, outside source who determines the contributing factors to the enrollment problem. Research findings concur that an external consultant ensures "an adequate level of objectivity to the assessment process . . . [and can provide] a fresh view regarding departmental activities [and] best make qualitative judgments . . ." (Marcus et al., 1983, pp. 41-42).

The needs assessment identifies the individual qualities, capabilities, and limitations of the department. It examines such areas as:

- departmental and institutional enrollment
- music curriculum
- music facilities
- music personnel
- student music organizations
- departmental activities
- institutional and community support

MECA draws on a specially-trained consultant who is also the creator of the enrollment campaign. The MECA Consultant, then, is an undeniable asset to the Music Department, functioning as the objective third party who guides the needs assessment, program development, and implementation design. In particular, the consultant:

- determines the program feasibility for the Music Department.
- conducts the departmental evaluation.
- collects the pertinent data.
- negotiates the program requirements with the Music Department and the administration.
- designs the customized strategy.
- assists the Music Department in designing and installing specific components of the program.

Purposes, Objectives, and Results

The needs assessment provides the conceptual framework for an individualized MECA plan. It determines the program purposes and objectives and the plan of action for producing the intended results. MECA purposes to:

- increase the number of music majors/minors.
- increase the enrollment in general music courses.

Besides adding students to both the institution and the department, MECA also allows and encourages the Music Department to operate as an independent unit that initiates its own recruitment.

MECA translates these two purposes into concrete tasks for recruiting more students. It recognizes enrollment as the key to departmental and institutional vitality. The primary program objectives are:

1) To plan enrollment strategies collaboratively and cooperatively with other administrative offices.
2) To increase dissemination of Music Department information campuswide, communitywide, and nationwide.
3) To increase Music Department performing opportunities on campus and in the community.

These objectives may be modified, and others may be added. They basically give direction to a specific department. Program objectives will differ from one department to another. The MECA plan of action develops these objectives into a series of Miniprojects for producing students.

MECA gives a Music Department the opportunity to demonstrate and enhance its excellence in the field of music. It can establish the Music Department and the institution as an educational center for music. Once a department is so acclaimed, the major benefits include:

. a revitalized Music Department.
. an increased departmental and institutional enrollment.
. an increased institutional awareness of the department.
. increased institutional and community support for the department.

These results can be achieved when key elements of MECA are followed:

- thorough evaluation of the department by the external MECA Consultant.
- implementation and maintenance of the Miniprojects by faculty, staff, and students.
- project support and management by the departmental chair.

Miniprojects

Miniprojects are the core of the Music Enrollment Campaign. Installed throughout consecutive semesters, they constitute a series of activities that utilize the departmental resources effectively to produce students. A department can select any combination of miniprojects and activities for its own MECA. Once implemented, a Miniproject becomes a continuous function of the department. The Miniprojects include activities related to:

- Recruitment
- Music Organizations
- Publicity
- Music Department Events
- Publications

MECA begins with easily manageable projects and progresses to more complex ones. Enrollment increases during implementation facilitate the more intricate tasks. Generally, a Miniproject is fully operational within one semester. Each

Miniproject is presented to departments in tables that detail its objective(s), activities, timeframe, and personnel. These tables are a "user-friendly" manual for performing the various projects. The complete MECA program can be installed in a two to four semester timeframe.

Budgeting

MECA can adapt to any Music Department because it does not request or require additional funds (an attractive feature to administrators). The departmental evaluation assesses the available monies that, together with the departmental needs, determine the program structure. Costs vary depending upon the type, quality, and quantity of items acquired, but the program pays for itself with the revenue generated from additional students.

A Budget Matrix helps the Music Department allocate its funds. The matrix itemizes each Miniproject and allocates funds to each item. The department needs only the freedom to allocate the budget in accordance with the program requirements. Again, the purpose is not to get money but to use the available money to get students.

Role of the Department Chair

MECA relies upon the working commitment of the Music Department Director, faculty, and students. The MECA Consultant, too, is a significant figure but eventually leaves the program in the hands of the department. Therefore, the prominent figure is

the Department Chair who serves as the Program Monitor and provides leadership for the entire department. Strong leadership helps the enrollment campaign to succeed, as Gleazer notes:

> In moving toward an objective, the beginning point is to make that objective visible in ways that persuade shared effort toward its achievement. The essential element in leadershp is to give visibility to the objective and to indicate the direction to those who will participate in the enterprise. Implicit in all of this is the notion that the leadership itself is clear on what it wants to achieve (1980, p. 160).

The Music Chair's personal commitment to increasing enrollment is essential, and a successful campaign depends upon this direct involvement. Responsibilities include:

- overseeing the total MECA implementation process.
- coordinating MECA and its personnel.
- evaluating the program and its progress.
- securing a cooperative relationship with other administrative offices.

The Automated Plan

MECA is also available as an automated program, a stand-alone system which furthers the Music Department as an independent agent. The Automated MECA permits the department to operate the program without the direct services of the administration and its supporting offices. The administrative offices

mainly supply information and/or personnel as requested by the department.

This automated version processes the program information in a more efficient and effective manner, saving time and paper. The system acts as the information resource unit for groups and/or persons involved in the program. The Automated MECA makes use of a generic Management Information System (MIS) that is used by both the MECA Consultant and the Music Department. It facilitates the consultant's design work and the program implementation and operation by the department.

Obviously, the automated program requires an automated department. The complete automation process is built into the automated enrollment campaign. The Music Department only has to accept the reality of office automation.

Long-term Effects

Once in place, MECA becomes an integral component of the department. Within the institution, MECA combines the efforts of many into a common cause. This shared effort promotes communication and cooperation among groups and people. Because it is customized, MECA harmonizes with the department, the school, and the community. It capitalizes on innovative strategies and methods for recruiting students and offers all students a way to get involved in music and in the institution. Once implemented fully, MECA is an "everyday" departmental operation that is, nevertheless, vital to its existence.

Moreover, MECA itself becomes an attraction that draws students to the Music Department because students recognize the opportunities for participation.

Music departments are in a critical situation and must find ways and means for justifying their existence. Contributing to the overall enrollment cause is a viable and practical solution for any department. With MECA, a Department of Music can benefit itself and the school and, thus, strengthen its position within the institutional system.

As seen in Washington, D.C., MECA gives a Music Department a "new image" and a "new lease on life."

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